
STANDARDIZED EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

APPROVED COURSE OF INSTRUCTION

FIELD COURSE

ORGANIZING FOR INCIDENTS OR EVENTS

**MODULE 8
I-300**

**PARTICIPANT
REFERENCE
MANUAL
2003**

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This module describes ways in which incidents and events are organized to ensure achievement of incident objectives. It discusses the steps in organizational development that should take place on the incident or at the event. The incident briefing and transfer of command is covered. The concept of Unified Command is also briefly addressed in this module.

Objectives:

1. Describe the steps in transferring and assuming incident command.
2. List the major elements included in the incident briefing, and the use of the Incident Briefing Form (ICS 201).
3. Describe how incidents can best be managed by appropriate and early designation of primary staff members and by proper delegation of authority.
4. Describe how Unified Command functions on a multi-jurisdiction or multi-agency incident.
5. List the minimum staffing requirements within each organizational element for at least two incidents of different sizes.
6. Describe reporting relationships and information flow within the Incident Organization.
7. Develop a sample organization around a major incident or event. Organizational development will include the use of all appropriate sections and organizational modules.

I. Approaches to Incident Organization

Organizing for incidents in the ICS is a simple and straightforward process if done according to procedure. There are two approaches that can be used to organize for incidents and events. One approach involves planning for a known upcoming event. The other, more common, approach is reacting to an unplanned incident.

A. Organizing for Events

Events are the easiest to prepare for. Planners can establish exactly what is required prior to the event and in advance of any activation of the organization.

Examples of the kinds of events which lend themselves to an ICS application include, but are certainly not limited to:

- Organizing for a major field training exercise or simulated emergency.
- A planned public event such as a major parade or concert.
- A prescribed fire, a demonstration, a major pest control effort, or a hazardous materials exercise.

In order to plan effectively, the planner must know as much as possible about the intended event.

Considerations in the planning stage are:

- Type of event
- Event participants
- Location, size, expected duration
- Single or multi-agency
- Single or multi-jurisdiction
- Command staff needs (information, safety, liaison)
- Kind, type, and number of resources required
- Projected aviation operations
- Staging areas required
- Other facilities required
- Kind and type of logistical support needs, e.g., communications, food, medical, finance considerations

- Known limitations or restrictions
- Available communications.

With information about each of those factors, the planning staff can develop the appropriate organizational structure to meet the essential needs of the event.

B. Organizing for Incidents

The second type of situation, and the one that is by far the most common, is the unplanned incident. This kind of incident is often characterized by several important factors:

- An incident situation of some form occurs.
- Time is of the essence.
- The situation is unstable.
- The incident has the potential to expand rapidly.
- Communications and information may be incomplete.
- Staff on scene may be experienced in control measures, but not necessarily experienced in managing expanding incidents.

This kind of situation requires immediate organizing actions to ensure effective incident management and control.

It is obvious, but too often overlooked that the number of considerations will increase as the situation deteriorates and the incident grows.

The first responding units to the incident must take the initial steps to provide organization for the incident. While that may appear obvious, the longer-term importance of these initial decisions is often overlooked.

What are the first things that need to be done? Emergencies such as fires, searches, law enforcement, hazardous materials and emergency medical situations have different characteristics and require specially trained personnel. Yet, they are quite similar in how they are approached from an incident management standpoint.

For any incident, the person currently in charge (Incident Commander) must do the following:

- Size up the situation.
- Determine if human life is at immediate risk.
- Establish the immediate objectives.
- Determine if there are enough and the right kind of resources on scene and/or ordered.
- Develop an Incident Action Plan.
- Establish an initial organization.
- Consider if span of control is or will soon approach practical limits.
- Ensure that personnel safety factors are taken into account.
- Determine if there are any environmental issues that need to be considered.
- Monitor work progress.
- Review and modify objectives and adjust the Incident Action Plan as necessary.

II. Transfer of Command

Let's assume that you as the Incident Commander, have considered all of the above and have initiated appropriate response activity for an incident.

Your supervisor has just arrived at the scene. You are informed that the supervisor will shortly assume command of the incident.

There are five important steps in effectively assuming command of an incident in progress.

1. The incoming Incident Commander should, if at all possible, personally perform an assessment of the incident situation with the existing Incident Commander.
2. The incoming Incident Commander must be adequately briefed.

This briefing must be by the current Incident Commander, and take place face-to-face if possible. The briefing must cover the following:

- Incident history (what has happened)
- Priorities and objectives

- Current plan
- Resource assignments including personnel deployment
- Incident organization
- Resources ordered/needed
- Facilities established
- Status of communications
- Any constraints or limitations
- Assessment of Incident potential.

The Incident Briefing Form (ICS 201) is especially designed to assist in incident briefings. It should be used whenever possible because it provides a written record of the incident as of the time prepared. The Incident Briefing Form (ICS 201) contains:

- A place for a sketch map
- Current objectives
- Current actions
- Organization Chart
- Resources summary

One of the features of this form is that it can be easily disassembled. This allows the Incident Commander to give certain portions to the Planning/Intelligence Section for use in developing situation and resources information on expanding incidents.

The Incident Briefing Form (ICS 201) is particularly valuable during the first operational period of an incident, and in many cases it will be the Incident Action Plan for the first Operational Period.

3. After the incident briefing, the incoming Incident Commander should determine an appropriate time for transfer of command.
4. At the appropriate time, notice of a change in incident command should be made to:
 - Agency headquarters (through dispatch)
 - General Staff members (if designated)
 - Command Staff members (if designated)

- All incident personnel.
5. The incoming Incident Commander may give the previous Incident Commander another assignment on the incident. There are several advantages of this:
- Retains first-hand knowledge at the incident site.
 - Allows the initial IC to observe the progress of the incident and to gain experience.

Transition of command on an expanding incident is to be expected. It does not reflect on the competency of the current Incident Commander. Using the above procedures will make the process work smoothly.

III. Changing the Incident Action Plan (IAP)

It is possible that the incoming IC, because of depth of experience or a change in incident related conditions, will desire to modify incident objectives upon transition of command. Changes could be required for the following reasons:

- Change in agency administrator goals
- Change in available resources - kinds or types
- Failure or unexpected success of tactical efforts
- Improved intelligence
- Cost factors
- Political considerations
- Environmental considerations.

Essential changes to the IAP should be made immediately, rather than allowing the existing plan to proceed. Delayed changes may result in additional control problems, greater loss, and increased expense and risk. Non essential changes to the IAP may be delayed until the start of the next operational period.

Making a change does not imply that previous decisions and actions were wrong. Many things can influence the need for change. The Incident Commander must be assertive but also aware of potential risk and safety considerations involved in changes. Three guidelines in making changes are:

- Be concerned about safety considerations
- Make changes if you must

- Make them sooner rather than later.

IV. Organizing Incident Operations

The Operations Section organization generally develops from the bottom up. As more resources are assigned to the incident, it is necessary to find ways to effectively organize and manage them. This is often accomplished initially by the Incident Commander or establishing Divisions and/or Groups. This often will be done before an Operations Section Chief is assigned.

A. Divisions/Groups

The primary consideration for the Incident Commander (or the Operations Section Chief if designated), when considering expanding to a division and/or group structure is usually span of control, but functional considerations may also affect that decision.

Divisions

Divisions define areas of the incident geographically. Examples might be floors of a building, from point A to point B on the ground, the east side of a building, etc.

Groups

The Operations Section may also be organized functionally. Where organization by function would be beneficial, there may be no need to establish geographic boundaries. In this instance, the organizational unit denoting a functional organization is a group. Examples include Medical Group, Utility Group, Perimeter Security Group, etc.

Not all incidents will lend themselves to just geographic or just functional organization. One of the advantages of ICS is the ability to use both Divisions and Groups on an incident.

B. Branches

Divisions and Groups can be clustered together into Branches. This is usually done when it is evident that the combined number of Divisions and Groups will soon exceed the recommended span of control guidelines.

In addition, there are other reasons that a branch structure may be needed on an incident.

The ICS Branch structure can be established to represent geographic, functional, or jurisdictional areas. Geographic branches can either be defined areas on the ground or they may be set up by jurisdiction. Examples of functional branches could be medical, fire, security, etc.

V. Using Unified Command

Any kind or size incident involving multi-jurisdiction or multi-agency responsibility should use a Unified Command structure.

Unified Command allows all agencies with responsibility for the incident, either jurisdictional or functional, to jointly provide management direction to an incident through a common set of incident objectives and strategies established at the command level. This is accomplished without losing or abdicating agency authority, responsibility, or accountability.

Under Unified Command, the various jurisdictions and/or agencies are blended together into an integrated unified team. The resulting organization may be a mix of personnel from several jurisdictions or agencies, each performing functions as appropriate and working toward a common set of objectives.

Under Unified Command, one person, the Operations Section Chief, is given the authority by the Unified Command Team to implement the tactical operations portion of the Incident Action Plan.

The Operations Section Chief can have one or more deputies from the other agencies involved at the incident.

Examples for use of Unified Command are in hazardous material spills, floods, fires or other emergencies where multiple agencies must work together. Even in a small incident in which there may only be a few resources, it makes sense for the agencies who have incident level jurisdiction to work together.

Unified Command represents an important element in increasing the effectiveness of multi-jurisdictional or multi-agency incidents. As incidents become more complex and involve more agencies, the need for Unified Command is increased.

Unified Command works the best when agencies that have to work together decide in advance that they will use Unified Command. This allows the opportunity for them to know each other and to develop joint plans.

Advantages of using Unified Command:

- One set of objectives is developed for the entire incident, and a collective approach is made to developing strategies.
- Information flow and coordination is improved between all jurisdictions and agencies involved in the incident.
- No agency's authority or legal requirements will be compromised or neglected.
- Each agency is fully aware of the plans, actions, and constraints of all others.

- The combined efforts of all agencies is optimized as they perform their respective assignments under a single Incident Action Plan.
- Duplicative efforts are reduced or eliminated, thus reducing cost and chances for frustration and conflict.

Primary Features of a Unified Command Incident Organization. Under Unified Command, there is:

- A single integrated incident organization.
- One Operations Section Chief to direct all tactical efforts.
- Collocated (shared) facilities.
- A single integrated planning process and Incident Action Plan.
- Shared Planning/Intelligence, Logistical and Finance/Administration operations wherever possible.
- A coordinated process for resource ordering.

The proper mix of participants in a Unified Command organization will depend on:

- The location of the incident, which often determines the jurisdictions that must be involved.
- The kind of incident, which dictates the functional agencies of the involved jurisdiction(s), as well as other agencies that may be involved.

Here are two examples of situations where Unified Command may be and probably should be applied:

A. Initial Response Incident

A small incident occurs where two agencies have jurisdictional responsibility. The two Incident Commanders will meet and establish a single incident command post (probably from a vehicle). They will brief each other on the situation. Together they will establish priorities and objectives, decide on an Incident Action Plan and distribution of resources. During the course of the incident, the Commanders will stay together, modify the Incident Action Plan if necessary, and issue orders individually to their agency resources. (No General or Command Staff assigned.)

This is the type of situation most often encountered. It is simple, direct, and employs the principles and concepts of Unified Command.

B. Large/Complicated Incident

A large and/or complicated incident occurs involving three or more agencies. Each agency's Incident Commander meets the others at a single incident command post to establish objective, priorities, and the sharing of resources. The Unified Command and Staff develop a single Incident Action Plan which is implemented by the Operations Section Chief. The Operations Section Chief normally will be from the agency with greatest present or potential involvement.

Problems or issues pertaining to a jurisdiction's involvement are addressed to that jurisdiction's Commander for consideration with the other Commanders. Problems pertaining to the Incident Action Plan are taken to the Incident Commander representing the Operations Section Chief's agency for consideration with other Commanders. The Incident Commanders (for the most part) will stay together at the Incident Command Post. One of the ICs may be designated as the lead spokesperson for the Operational Period.

VI. Staffing the ICS Organization

Staffing considerations are always based on the needs of the incident. The number of personnel and the organization structure are totally dependent on the size and complexity of the incident. There is no absolute standard to follow.

Some general guidelines are:

1. Deputies may be used at Incident Command, General Staff (Section), and Branch levels.
2. Command Staff personnel may have assistants as required. Assistants may also be used to manage units established at camps (i.e., Assistant Ground Support Unit Leader, Camp #2).
3. The Incident Commander may establish divisions and/or groups prior to designating an Operations Section.
4. In most multi-jurisdictional incidents, the use of a Unified Command structure is recommended, including an individual from each functional agency or jurisdiction assigned to the Unified Command.
5. After expanding into divisions, activation of planning/intelligence and logistics functions should be considered. The decision will always be based on the present and anticipated needs of the incident.

The following table is an example (only) of how the staffing table might be developed for an incident. The key point is that as the Operations Section grows, additional staff will be required in Planning/Intelligence, Logistics and Finance/Administration Sections.

EXAMPLE ONLY

ICS POSITIONS	TWO DIVISIONS OR GROUPS	FIVE DIVISIONS OR GROUPS	TWO BRANCHES
Operations Section Chief		1	1
Branch Director			2
Division/Group Supervisor	2	5	UP TO 10
Planning/Intel. Section Chief		1	1
Status Recorders	1	1	2
Field Observers		2	4
Logistics Section Chief			1
Incident Dispatcher			1
Message Center Operator			2
Messengers			2
Communications Technician	1	1	3
Food Unit	4	6	10
Supply Unit		2	4
Facility Unit		2	4
Ground Support	1	2	4
Finance/Admin. Section Chief			
TOTALS	9	23	51

VII. Reporting Relationships and Information Flow Within the Incident Organization

As the incident organization grows to meet the needs of the incident, care must be taken to ensure that information transfer is handled effectively. There are essentially two principles to be followed:

1. There is complete freedom within the organization to exchange information.
2. Orders, directives, resource requests, and status changes must follow the hierarchy of command unless otherwise directed.

Each of these is elaborated as follows:

A. Information Exchange

The ICS organizational framework is open for individuals to freely supply and exchange information. Three examples are:

1. The Food Unit Leader may directly contact the Planning/Intelligence Section's Resources Unit to determine the number of persons requiring feeding.
2. The Cost Unit Leader may directly discuss and share information on alternative strategies with the Planning/Intelligence Section Chief.
3. Division Supervisor A may contact the Situation Unit Leader to share information on an unusual environmental hazard in the Division.

B. Flow of Orders and Directives Within the ICS Organization

1. Division B supervisor requests fuel for resources within the Division. (This request will be passed through the Branch or Operations Section Chief to ensure that fuel requests can be consolidated before going to Logistics).
2. Operations Section Chief in a Branch and Division organization will pass directives to change the status of resources within a particular division through the Branch Director. (This ensures that the Branch Director is aware of any changes).
3. The Situation Unit Leader will request additional personnel to work in the unit through the Planning/Intelligence Section Chief. (This ensures that personnel already assigned to the Planning/Intelligence Section will be used if available).